



FBLA



Career and Technical Student Organizations

Turning Students into Leaders

Disabled is the last word that comes to mind when meeting L.J. Bryant, a freshman political science major at Hendrix College in Conway.

Confident, poised, energetic, high achiever – yes. But not disabled.

L.J. was diagnosed with epilepsy when he was in junior high school. That same year, his father died. To help him deal with these issues, his mother gave him a choice – he could either let the obstacles of life control him or he could control them.



To help overcome these obstacles, L.J. joined Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, a national career and technical student organization that helps students develop leadership skills and address important personal, family, work, and societal issues through family and consumer sciences education.

During his senior year at Weiner High School, L.J. served as vice president of finance for National FCCLA, which has a membership of 220,000 students. “As a national officer . . . I gave over 150 speeches, reaching over 300,000 people,” L.J. says. “It was a wonderful opportunity.”

As part of FCCLA’s National Executive Council, L.J. got to participate in a five-day leadership training workshop in Reston, Va. Along with the nine other council members, he planned the organization’s annual National Leadership Meeting in San Diego and its outreach project, which raised money for tsunami victims. The council members also conducted training sessions at four regional leadership meetings and met with national business leaders and federal officials.

While meeting with Arkansas’ congressional delegation and officials at the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education, L.J. discussed issues that are important to students, such as workplace safety for teens and continued funding for career and technical



education. L.J. says the federal Perkins funding for career and technical education must be protected as “79 percent of Arkansas students are involved in career and technical education, which relies upon \$1.3 billion in Perkins funding.”

All the experience he gained and the contacts he made through FCCLA gave L.J. an impressive resume, loads of confidence, and a jump on the competition when it came time for college. “GPA (grade point average) is important,” L.J. says, “but a lot of people have a good GPA; not everyone is involved in other activities. My FCCLA involvement stood out on my college applications.”

L.J. is one of thousands of Arkansas students who have overcome obstacles, honed their academic and leadership skills, and made valuable contacts through career and technical education and a career and technical student organization.

In recognition of the contributions career and technical education and the various student organizations make to Arkansas, Gov. Mike Huckabee has declared the week of Feb. 12-18 as Career and Technical Education Week, DECA Week, FCCLA Week, Future Business Leaders of America Week, Health Occupations Students of America Week, and SkillsUSA Week. He also has declared the week of Feb. 18-25 as FFA Week.

“Career and technical education provides Arkansans with a school-to-careers connection and is the backbone of a strong, well-educated workforce,” the governor says in the proclamations.

He adds that it “gives high school students experience in practical, meaningful applications of basic skills such as reading, writing and mathematics, thus improving the quality of their education, motivating at-risk students and giving all students leadership opportunities in their fields and in their communities.”

